Meeting of the Advisory Committee of March 3rd, 2014

REPORT (ENGLISH Version)

Agenda of the Meeting held on March 3rd, 2014 – 12:00 at ANVUR:

2. Presentation of TECO preliminary results (Test on Learning Outcomes)
3. Update on the progress of the Working Groups
4. AOB

Attendees:

| CUN       | Gabriele Anzellotti
|------------|---------------------|
| CNEL      | Ivan Lo Bello (Presidente)  
            | Guido Fiegna  
            | Mariano Bella  
            | Maria Cristina Calicchia |
| Accademia dei Lincei | Ciro Ciliberto |
| Conferenza Stato Regioni | Adriana Agrimi |
| CNSU      | Angelo Antinoro  
            | Caterina Chiocchetta  
            | Nicola Minerva |

Absentees (justified):

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<th>CODAU</th>
<th>Luca Bardi</th>
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| ERC    | Claudio Bordignon  
            | Giorgio Margaritondo |
| CNR    | Luigi Nicolais |
| CRUI   | Stefano Paleari |
| OCSE   | Dirk Van Damme |
| ESU    | Leonardo Esposito (dimissionario) |
| EUA    | Maria Helena Nazaré |
| ESU    | Fernando Miguel Galan Palomares |

Chairman Lo Bello invites to participate to the meeting ANVUR President, Stefano Fantoni, ANVUR Director Roberto Torrini, the member of ANVUR Board, Fiorella Kostoris, the Manager of the Research Evaluation Area, Marco Malgarini and Brigida Blasi of ANVUR Technical Secretariat. The Advisory Committee ratifies.

The Chairman introduces the work of the Committee, welcoming new members Antinoro, Chiocchetta e Minerva, appointed by the National Council of University Students (CNSU). Then he informs the attendees that Leonardo Esposito has resigned from the Committee (he is no longer a member of the ESU-ESIB Board Meeting) and the procedure for the new appointment will be soon started.
1. **Preview of ANVUR 2013 Report on the State of University and Research System**

The President draws the attention on the first item on the agenda: ANVUR 2013 Report on the State of University and Research System. The presentation was scheduled for February 25, 2014, but due to the political revulsion in the government, the Agency will present the report to the newly appointed minister on March 18.

The report, in accordance with article 4 of DPR 76/2010, shall be prepared and presented every two years to the Minister, who shall forward it to the President of the Ministers’ Council, the CIPE and the Parliament. The 2013 report is articulated in two sections.

The first is dedicated to the university system with a focus on:

- Students and graduates
- Resources, higher education offering, governance

The second part devoted to research with a focus on:

- Resources, institutional characteristics and funding
- Quality and impact of the scientific production

After this introduction, President Lo Bello invites ANVUR Director Torrini to present a summary of the data analyzed in the report.

Torrini introduces the item, premising that according to ANVUR Regulation, the system analysis of universities and research organizations is one of the incumbent tasks for the agency. He also emphasizes that the knowledge of the dynamics of this system is not taken for granted for policy makers and operators. The presentation of the Report is one of the tasks inherited from the National Council for the Evaluation of the University System (CNVSU) and in fact, the 2013 Report retraces the issues analyzed by CNVSU reports and integrates them with a section devoted to research. The periodization used is very large since this is the first report signed by ANVUR, in future a more recently historical perspective will be adopted. In addition, the choice of the period is aimed at the understanding of the dynamics triggered by the transition to the 3 +2 system and the effects that this reform has had on human and financial resources.

The summary of the report consists of 100 pages and is a guidance to the reading of the Report, it will be available on the website ANVUR along with the full version of the Report.

After this rich presentation, President Lo Bello thanks Torrini and ANVUR expressing great appreciation for the report’s informative potentiality, whose summary has more than 100 pages, to indicate the scale of the work made. He also emphasizes the importance that the ANVUR Report can have on the university process and policy, highlighting the critical issues to be overcome. In this regard, the President wishes a quick action to resolve the nodes that still remain, especially from a territorial point of view, e.g. the risk of university desertification in the southern Italy.

Antinoro, highlighting the accuracy of ANVUR’s work in collecting information about the university, asks for a clarification on the possible reasons lying behind the high dropout rate marked by the Report, in particular to understand at what point the university ceases to meet students’ needs. Torrini says that the main difficulties are concentrated at the initial level: many students drop out after the first year of university (15%), another 15% after the first year decides to change course and another 22% abandons in the second year. The problem can then be detected in the poor guidance tools available for the school leavers.

Ciliberto emphasizes the importance of a statistical analysis of the report, but also of a cultural and a political one. It has been essential the activation of the Tirocinio Formativo Attivo: it is an habilitation for
teachers but also an instrument to measure their actual skills in teaching subjects different from their background. The recent PPAs (Percorsi Abilitanti Speciali) have shown more disappointing results: e.g. in some cases, intermediate tests have shown poor results especially on mathematical and scientific competences.

Chiocchetta intervenes indicating the link between the matriculation decline and the increase in student fees. Torrini recalls that the economic crisis has affected many university dynamics in the recent years: with the unemployment rise an increase in university matriculation was expected too, but in the meanwhile family incomes have fallen and are unable to finance the studies. It is therefore necessary to better investigate the reasons of the drop in the incentives, especially for certain age groups and from a territorial point of view.

Minerva subsequently raises the issue of southern universities pointing out that the difference in performance is probably due to structural and organizational factors.

In this regard, President Lo Bello argues that some universities have poor performances and also provide poor education to students. For this purpose, it is necessary to increase scholarships and student loans to allow students to move to the best universities.

Anzellotti remarks that for the first time the report gives complete information on the evolution of dropouts by cohort. Therefore he wishes the promotion of a debate on the quality of university teaching, particularly on issues such as high school final grades and entry tests as selection mechanisms.

Fiegna claims the importance of the right to education considering scholarships as necessary condition to make a choice and incentives for study regularity. However, in response to the crisis, differently from many countries that have increased the resources available to education, Italy has preferred to cut off funding. According to Fiegna, it would be interesting to understand which universities has started credit recovery courses, starting from the results of the entry test.

Agrimi asks and has confirmation of the future availability of the data at a regional level. She adds that since data sources are different, ANVUR could be a good mediator for the use of these databases.

Antinoro notes that the success in students’ career, their performance of the last two years of high school, the English knowledge and the high school grade are important factors that would be necessary to be taken into account also in the Report. Torrini replies that these connections are evident, but difficult to be measured and not examined in the Report.

2. Presentation of TECO preliminary results (Test on Learning Outcomes)

With reference to the presentation of TECO results, prof. Kostoris reminds how this work is the result of an experimentation lasted 18 months. In fact, DPR 76 requires to verify learning outcomes for both formal and substantive reasons such as the mismatching between the skills needed by companies and those possessed by young people entering the labor market each year.

This information is of great interest for families, to assess the employability level of the different educational paths, and for universities, to integrate and refocus the higher education offering by having a feedback on their achievements, and in general to taxpayers that expect a return of the expense.

In May 2012, ANVUR has decided to make a feasibility study of this project, and came after a month and a half to the construction of the following criteria:
• Adoption of a single unique test for all undergraduate courses and students. It is estimated, in fact, that the "horizontal skills" are unaffected by the attendance of a particular educational path with respect to another;
• Use the CLA model;
• Use of a limited university population (students who have obtained a set of “di base caratterizzanti” CFU);
• Focus on the level of skills achieved and not on the added value offered by the university (the difference between the skills at the entrance and at the graduation). In this test the effect of variables that could influence the outcomes has been neutralized (e.g. best high school final grade, presence of university graduates in family).

The project has involved 12 universities starting from 30 proposals received. The test had a duration of 90 minutes (30 reserved for 20 closed-ended questions, the remaining 60 reserved for open-ended questions). After Kostoris’s presentation of the main experimentation results, it has followed a discussion with various interventions (Chiocchetta, Ciliberto, Anzellotti, Fiegna) aimed at deepening different aspects of the experimentation.

3. Update on the progress of the Working Groups

President Lo Bello updates the new members of the Committee on the working groups and ask them to tell the group to which they wish to contribute. Antinoro and Chiocchetta will participate to group 1 - Teaching (AVA) and students, Calicchia to group 2 - Research (VQR) and PhD Programmes, and Minerva to group 3 - Third Mission.

4. AOB

President Lo Bello asks ANVUR on behalf of the Committee to update those present on ANVUR’s work on Phd programmes evaluation.

Malgarini describes the advancement state of the accreditation of PhD programmes.

Ciliberto points out that the latest version has much improved and it is an example of virtuous communication between ANVUR and stakeholders on a vital area in which science is taught to be produced. He suggests to raise thresholds especially for coordinators in order to ensure excellence.

President Lo Bello suggests that the theme of Phd courses should be addressed in a systematic way in the next meeting of the Advisory Committee.

Agrimi sets a different theme, proposing to make a reflection on universities’ third mission beyond the Committee’s meetings, in particular, together with the State-Regions Conference, she is representative for, and in the seat of the Permanent Observatory on Innovation and Research Policies.

The President expresses agreement with the proposal and thanks those present for attending the meeting.

At 17:00, there being no other matters for discussion, the plenary meeting is closed.